



NEWS RELEASE

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New measures provide consistent, humane approach to removing encampments on city-owned land

SEATTLE – The city of Seattle today enacted a multi-departmental administrative rule and issued an Executive Order concerning the removal of illegal encampments from city property.

Effective immediately, the new rule and procedures contain significant improvements to the way the city responds to unauthorized encampments. The changes include a consistent and coordinated process for providing encampment occupants: notice of encampment removal; outreach to connect the campers with needed services and shelter; additional shelter space if needed; and temporary storage of personal items.

The city of Seattle is committed to ending homelessness. Working with local partners, the city is implementing the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. We are funding and finding permanent housing for homeless people. We also fund rental assistance to prevent homelessness, as well as other services that help homeless people stabilize their lives and live independently. In 2007, the city allocated nearly \$40 million toward ending homelessness. See the attached fact sheet for details regarding the city's efforts.

City staff have been removing encampments from city property for more than 15 years. Encampments in greenbelts and public properties present serious public safety and health problems including unsanitary toileting practices; increased population of rats; illegal behavior including drug use and excessive noise; intimidation of other users by residents of unauthorized encampments; large quantities of garbage, including used hypodermic needles; fires and destruction of property.

In August 2007, staff from several city departments removed encampments from the Northeast Queen Anne greenbelt. In one day, staff removed seven tons of debris. However, they were not able to fully clean the site and concerns arose about removal procedures including the posting of out-of-date phone numbers. After review of the removal procedures, staff determined that the procedures should be improved and standardized.

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The new administrative rule establishes consistent approaches for removing encampments on land owned by city departments. The updated procedures build on the rule to respond to the unauthorized encampments in a way that provides humane assistance to people displaced from the encampments, addresses public safety and health concerns of the community, and enforces laws.

Key Elements of the Administrative Rule

- Defines unauthorized encampments and specifies operating hours for each property
- Describes enforcement options
- Provides a minimum of 72 hours notice to encampment occupants before removal of personal property
- Provides opportunity for retrieval of personal items
- Provides storage of personal items for up to 60 days

Key Elements of Encampment Removal Procedures

- Provides consistent, coordinated approach and procedures across all city departments
- Directs the public and staff to work through the city's Customer Service Bureau to identify unauthorized encampments
- Provides outreach to unauthorized campers to connect them with needed services and shelters
- Provides added shelter capacity if needed

Earlier this year, the city issued a draft of the new rule and procedures. During a public comment period from Jan. 14 to 31, 2008, city staff received many written comments. The city also conducted a public hearing on Jan. 28, 2008. All comments were considered as city staff developed final versions of the rule and procedures.

"We received a lot of thoughtful input and it's reflected in the changes to the documents," said Seattle Human Services Department Director Patricia McInturff.

The key changes to the rule and procedures prompted by public comments include increasing the minimum amount of notice given to encampment occupants from 48 hours to 72 hours; clarification of the definition of "personal items" that the city will save and store for up to 60 days; and a longer duration between the time a complaint is filed and the target date for encampment removal (from 10 business days to 21 days). In addition, in response to request, we are issuing the procedures as an Executive Order.

For more information on the new administrative rule and procedures, including copies of the documents themselves, please visit www.seattle.gov/humanservices.

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